

Finance, Revenue & Bonding Committee

Public Testimony of Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF)
S.B. 487: An Act Establishing the Infant and Toddler Early Care and Family Support Initiative
Submitted by: Madeline Granato, Policy Director
March 30, 2022

The Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF) is a statewide nonprofit that advocates for and empowers women and girls in Connecticut, especially those who are underserved or marginalized. For forty-eight years, CWEALF has been a leading advocate for policies that advance the economic security of women across our state and promote gender equity .

Through CWEALF's Legal Education Program, we provide information, education, referrals, and bilingual advocacy to the Connecticut community to ensure that all individuals in our state have access to legal justice. The majority of CWEALF's clients are low-income women with at least one dependent.

We urge the committee to support S.B. 487: *An Act Establishing the Infant and Toddler Early Care and Family Support Initiative*, which will redirect existing tax revenue from the budget reserve to a new, non lapsing Early Care and Family Support account. Under S.B. 487, funds in this account will then be used to contract with both child care centers and family child care homes to increase the supply of high quality infant toddler care, with priority given to child care providers in lower income areas and child care deserts.

Access to affordable, quality child care is essential to support Connecticut's workforce; however, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, a 2018 report indicated that 44% of Connecticut's population lived in a "child care desert," defined as an area with "little or no access to quality child care."¹

The Office of Early Child (OEC) also estimated prior to COVID-19 that Connecticut was short 51,000 licensed child care spaces for infants and toddlers. Child care deserts are more likely to exist in geographic areas with higher percentages of rural, low-income, Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino families.² Research shows the pandemic could result in the loss of almost half (48%) of Connecticut's child care supply, or 46,349 slots.³

Lack of access to child care is compounded by issues with affordability. Research in Connecticut depicts that only 1 in 20 families of color can afford high quality child care

¹ CTDATA . (2022). *Essential equity: Women, covid-19, and rebuilding CT*. The Connecticut Women and Girls Data Platform. Retrieved from: <https://womenandgirls.ctdata.org/>

² Ibid

³ Ibid

compared to 1 in 5 families in the overall population.⁴ When families do not have access to the affordable and reliable childcare that they need, women are more likely to bear the burden of caregiving responsibilities: during the pandemic, 76% female parents reported needing to stay home and not work due to their child care situation compared to 24% of male parents.⁵

Child care is essential to our economy and women's reentry into the workforce. We urge lawmakers to take bold and intentional action this year to reshape and improve our current child care system and ensure an equitable recovery from the COVID-19 crisis.

CWEALF urges the Committee to advance S.B. 487 to chart a new path for child care in our state and a necessary step forward in uplifting the economic security of child care educators and the women and families who depend on access to affordable child care to stay financially afloat.

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid